

NAVY DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATION
DIVISION OF NAVAL HISTORY (OP 29)
SHIP'S HISTORIES SECTION

HISTORY OF USS REFUGE (AH 11)

USS REFUGE (AH 11) was first acquired by the Navy for use as a transport. Built in 1921 by the New York Ship Building Corporation of Camden, New Jersey, as the SS PRESIDENT MADISON, she was formerly owned and operated by the American President Lines. She was acquired by the Navy from the War Shipping Administration on 11 April 1942 for conversion to a troop transport and assigned the name USS KENMORE (AP 62).

KENMORE was placed in commission at Baltimore, Maryland, on 5 August 1942 under the command of Commander Myron T. Richardson, USN. After shakedown training in the Chesapeake Bay she steamed for Norfolk, Virginia, arriving 6 September 1942. She embarked men and equipment of the 13th Marine Defense Battalion as well as the 18th and 19th Navy Construction Battallions and departed Norfolk 19 September 1942. She arrived at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, on 24 September and sailed in convoy for the Pacific, 4 October 1942. Steaming via the Panama Canal (8-12 October), she arrived in convoy at Dumbéa Bay off Noumea, New Caledonia on 11 November 1942. After debarking troops and unloading a cargo which included ammunition and fifty tons of frozen beef quarters for use of Army troops she reported for duty 19 November as a unit under the command of Rear Admiral R. K. Turner, USN, Commander Amphibious Forces, South Pacific.

KENMORE departed Noumea 28 November 1942 as a unit of Task Force SIXTY-TWO. She arrived off the beach east of Togoma Point, Guadalcanal on 3 December and after unloading troops and cargo, departed 5 December 1942. Steaming via Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides Islands, she returned to Noumea with troops and cargo, 11 December 1942. Two days later she steamed unescorted for San Francisco, arriving 5 January 1943 for overhaul by the General Engineering and Dry Dock Company.

From 8 February to 27 May 1943, KENMORE transported troops and cargo between San Francisco and the Hawaiian Islands. Departing San Francisco on 13 June 1943, she sailed for Noumea, New Caledonia, arriving 6 July 1943. She departed 9 July and after anchoring off Tenaru Beach, Guadalcanal (13 July), steamed via Tulagi Harbor (15 July) for return to Noumea on 20 July 1943.

On 25 July 1943, KENMORE departed Noumea for the east coast of the United States. She transited the Panama Canal on 19 August and after loading passengers at Cristobal, sailed via Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, for

USS REFUGE (AH 11)

Norfolk, Virginia, arriving 2 September 1943. She then steamed to Baltimore, Maryland, where she was placed out of commission 16 September 1943 for conversion to a hospital ship by the Maryland Dry Dock Company. Her change of name from KENMORE (AP 62) to REFUGE (AH 11) was approved 2 September 1943 to be effective when recommissioned as a hospital ship.

REFUGE was placed in commission at Baltimore, Maryland, on 24 February 1944 under the command of Commander M. A. Jurkops, USNR. She was partially fitted out at Baltimore and on 10 March, steamed for completion of equipment in the Norfolk Navy Yard. She was assigned to the Service Force, U. S. Atlantic Fleet and given the duty of transporting casualties from the war zones to the United States.

On her first voyage, REFUGE departed Hampton Roads 20 April and after embarking patients at Mers-El-Kebir, Algeria (6-8 May), returned to Charleston, South Carolina, 24 May 1944. During the period from 1 June to 29 July 1944 she made two voyages to the British Isles, embarking patients at Belfast, Ireland; Liverpool, England; and Milford Haven, Wales. These patients were returned to Newport News and Norfolk, Virginia. On 2 August she again sailed for the Mediterranean, arriving at Oran, Algeria on 17 August 1944. The next day she steamed to the coast of southern France and from 22 to 30 August made two voyages between St. Trapez Bay and Naples, Italy, evacuating casualties of war. On 16 September she embarked casualties and departed Naples for Oran where she took aboard more patients then steamed for New York, arriving 6 October 1944.

REFUGE underwent overhaul at New York, departing 1 November 1944 for duty in the South Pacific as a unit of the Service Force, Seventh Fleet. She transited the Panama Canal 10 November and arrived in Humboldt Bay, Dutch New Guinea, 16 December 1944. She departed 19 December for the Philippine Islands. On 24 December she arrived in San Pedro Bay, Leyte Gulf, and commenced embarking patients from small landing craft. By 30 June 1945, she had made six voyages from that area to deliver her casualties to either Hollandia, New Guinea, or Seeadler Harbor, Manus, Admiralty Islands. She departed Seeadler Harbor on 1 July for Manila where she received patients from various units of the Fleet until the end of August 1945.

On 31 August 1945, REFUGE departed Manila for Jinsen, Korea, arriving 8 September 1945. She sailed 17 September and after embarking evacuees at Shanghai, China (19-27 September), steamed for Okinawa, arriving 2 October 1945. She then made two voyages from Okinawa to Tsingtao, China and return (5-20 October).

REFUGE embarked patients and troops for return to the United States, departing Okinawa 22 October 1945. She received additional patients at Saipan (28-29 October) and arrived at San Francisco, California, 18 November

USS REFUGE (AH 11)

1945. She underwent overhaul until 9 December and two days later departed San Francisco for Yokosuka, Japan, arriving 4 January 1946. After embarking Army troops for transportation to the United States, she departed 7 January and returned to Seattle, Washington, 28 January 1946. The next day Commander B. H. Bassett, USNR, relieved Captain M. A. Jurkops, USNR.

REFUGE remained at Seattle, Washington, and was placed out of commission on 2 April 1946. Her name was stricken from the Navy list on 8 May 1946 and she was delivered to the War Shipping Administration on 29 June 1946.

REFUGE earned one battle star and other awards for operations as listed below:

1 Star/INVASION OF SOUTHERN FRANCE: 15 Aug - 25 Sep 1944

NAVY OCCUPATION SERVICE MEDAL (Asia): 17 Sep - 22 Oct 1945;
30 Dec 1945 - 7 Jan 1946

CHINA SERVICE MEDAL; 17 Sep - 22 Oct 1945

STATISTICS (1945)

LENGTH OVER-ALL	522'8"
EXTREME BEAM:	62'
LIMITING DISPLACEMENT:	
Tons:	16,800
Limiting Draft:	24'
TRIAL SPEED:	
Knots:	11.5
DESIGN COMPLEMENT:	
Officers:	79
Enlisted:	464

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